



Statement for the Record

**NATIONAL COALITION**  
*for* **HOMELESS VETERANS**

**United States House of Representatives**

**Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

**Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity**

**“Legislative Hearing”**

March 10, 2020

**Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Bilirakis, and distinguished Members of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.**

On behalf of our Board of Directors and Members across the country, thank you for the opportunity to share the views of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV) with you. NCHV is the resource and technical assistance center for a national network of community based service providers and local, state and federal agencies that provide emergency, transitional, and supportive housing, food, health services, job training and placement assistance, legal aid and case management support for thousands of homeless, at-risk, and formerly homeless veterans each year. We are committed to working with our network and partners across the country until no veteran is homeless.

As of March 2020, 79 communities and three states have achieved the federal benchmarks and criteria for ending veteran homelessness. This is important proof that building systems to end veteran homelessness nationwide is achievable. Continued progress comes at a pace that is challenging to maintain, requiring a dedication to surpassing the status quo. Given the 37,085 veterans experiencing homelessness on any given night according to the latest PIT count and the ebb and flow of veterans entering and exiting homelessness, we still have much work to do across the nation. From NCHV's perspective, every veteran deserves safe and permanent housing, whether they are currently experiencing homelessness or are facing housing-cost burdens that put them at risk of homelessness. We must enhance and invest in efforts to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring, for veterans and all Americans.

The continuous improvement of veterans' programs addressed by the hearing today is a testament to the hard work and collaboration between stakeholders and across the aisle. NCHV recognizes the effort it takes to marshal an idea through the legislative process to produce the proposed legislation before us and would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your commitment to supporting legislation that ends veteran homelessness. We are sharing our positions on several pieces of legislation being considered today to better support veterans experiencing or at-risk of homelessness across the nation.

## **1. Reducing Veteran Homelessness Act of 2020**

NCHV supports this legislative proposal.

The proposed language allows the GPD program to reimburse grantees for HMIS fees if they have no other means to receive access via other grants.

The language will also make adjustments to the per diem rate for care by allowing for increases to the base rate based on locality pay disparities. NCHV has heard from our member organizations that operating GPD grants at the current reimbursement rate is unsustainable. We support an increase in GPD reimbursement rate and understand that the number of beds in the overall portfolio could change as a result of this legislation.

The bill would allow for much needed alterations to HUD-VA Supportive Housing (VASH) case management by first expanding the hiring authority of the VA to make all social worker hires purely title 38 hires.

And finally, the bill would allow the Secretary to contract for case management services when more than 15% of vouchers have gone unused in the preceding year and the VA has unfilled case manager positions that remained vacant in excess of 9 months. Case management is vital to the success of the HUD-VASH program, in terms of housing stability for veteran participants.

## **2. IHS HUD-VASH**

NCHV supports this legislative proposal.

This language would allow VA to enter into MOU with the Indian Health Service (IHS,) allowing IHS Case Managers to provide case management to veterans who receive housing vouchers through Tribal HUD-VASH. Culturally competent care has been proven to improve health outcomes and quality of care while reducing racial disparities. In the specific case of Tribal HUD-VASH, this could also improve voucher utilization in areas where VA has faced challenges hiring case management staff for this critical program. Native Americans serve at the highest per capita rate of any ethnic group in this country, and as such are more than deserving of the benefits this legislation can bestow.

**3. H.R. 2224**

NCHV supports this legislative proposal's intent.

NCHV continues to support the intent of the legislation, as the population of women veterans experiencing homelessness has increased in visibility, yet there remain concerns as to possible unintended consequences. We caution against prioritizing a segment of the population which, to some level, may disenfranchise the remaining individuals currently being served by the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP).

In order to increase the availability of services to women and parenting veterans, NCHV recommends enhanced outreach and engagement with this community and to increase the visibility of these populations to grantees. Prioritizing them for services would not necessarily increase the availability of employment services to this group of veterans.

**4. H.R. 5324**

NCHV supports this legislative proposal.

NCHV operates a toll-free referral line where we connect veterans and their families who are facing a housing crisis to services and resources in their community. In doing that, we have noticed a steady stream of wives, husbands, and caregivers of veterans who are looking at service availability to address their veteran's housing, employment, sustenance or other needs. Improving access to assistance and benefits information for caregivers will improve their ability to care for their veterans.

**5. ED TAP**

NCHV supports this legislative proposal and requests modification.

NCHV requests that the housing counseling language in Section 3 be expanded to include more comprehensive guidance on issues related to housing beyond VA's home loan guaranty program. Many new veterans may not be in the position to purchase a home at the time they leave the military. Further, NCHV has received periodic calls on our referral line from veterans who are struggling to identify a place to live when they leave the military and

are unaware of how to find somewhere to rent. Housing should be treated as urgently as employment as servicemembers transition out of the military. Therefore, we must equip them with the skills to find a place to live whether renting or purchasing, as well as how to access supportive services or homeless assistance if they need it.

#### 6. FEE HMIS

NCHV supports this legislative proposal and requests modification.

NCHV requests that the bill not only cover HMIS reimbursement for Title 38 Section 2011 GPD capital grant recipients but be expanded to cover all GPD recipients. This would include sections 2012, 2013, and 2061 in addition to section 2011 (GPD Capital Grantees) in the current language on line 9.

- i. Add 2012 - GPD Per Diem Only Payment Recipients
- ii. Add 2013 - GPD Transition in Place Grant Recipients
- iii. Add 2061 - GPD Special Needs Grant Recipients

These grants are distributed for the express purpose of providing shelter with case management, rather than for the sole purpose of purchasing or renovating a shelter building and these should also be allowed to receive reimbursement for HMIS reimbursement fees.

NCHV thanks you for your past and continued support of veteran homelessness programs and your consideration of these important requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathryn Monet', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kathryn Monet  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans